



2025 Spring Newsletter

In our autumn 2024 newsletter, when Sue commented on the alignment of the planets and a difficult year faced, we are sure she did not foresee the tragic start to 2025 for us all at the sanctuary. As many of you know, Sue lost her valiant battle with cancer and sadly passed away on January 27th peacefully in her sleep.

She was comfortable and pain free, thanks to the dedication and care of the nurses in North West Hospice Sligo. Sue leaves us with an amazing legacy.

The Sanctuary was her life's work of love and dedication to abused, abandoned, neglected and forgotten donkeys and equines, and as Sue wanted, her sanctuary will continue.



The day to day running of the sanctuary has been taken over by Nathan McKeown, ably assisted by his partner Rebecca, our wonderfully dedicated volunteers and backed by the Board of Directors.

Between us, we will continue with Sue's vision to offer a place of peace and refuge for old, injured, unwanted, abandoned, neglected and abused donkeys, who through no fault of their own have fallen onto hard times.

We also lost several of our beloved donkeys and ponies over the winter months. With an aged herd, it is always to be expected, but still hard to deal with.

Benny the donkey came to the Sanctuary 27 years ago at the age of 4. He was always in the shed looking for food and would nudge you over until he got something!

He was such a handsome boy, and he has left such a big hole in all our heart's.



In November our tiny Hugs decided her time had come to cross the rainbow bridge, and we sadly had to let her go.

In her prime, she was a bright chestnut with flaxen points and some white on her face, with a serious attitude. In fact, Sue often commented that Hugs was probably not the most applicable name for her.

She would barge, bite and kick if she felt threatened but she did want to be friendly and craved love. During more recent years however, as she got older, she became a lot friendlier and would let you pet her in return for some treats! Her presence around the yard in the mornings is sorely missed.

At the beginning of December, we lost Bandit, who arrived with his sidekick Smokey from another shelter. Though he was only in our care for a few weeks he was very much loved and so affectionate. Both Smokey and Bandit arrived in terrible condition with terrible hooves and being severely underweight, we knew they had a terrible start to life. Sadly, Bandit was extremely weak and, despite all our care and minding of him, he died peacefully surrounded by all of us and his friend Smokey. Smokey is still with us, and after a winter rugged and with extra feeds, he is in fine fettle, and we hope to have many years with him.

Cobby came to the sanctuary nineteen years ago, after the death of his previous owner. He was a nice quiet, gentle gelding and soon bonded with Mini-Mo (small black Shetland pony) and Mia (white pony). At the age of 27, Cobby had started to lose weight and condition, and over the winter months couldn't keep any weight on.

After the snow at the beginning of January, our volunteers brought him in, put him under the heat-lamp and called the vet. Sadly, she told us it was his time, so surrounded by friends Cobby took his final breath.



Dear old Wonkey Donkey was 33 years old and had been with us for just over six years. He was a very loving boy who would always be waiting for a bucket in the mornings and wasn't afraid to tell you when you were taking too long!

The few days before, Wonkey wasn't acting himself and he wasn't braying or shoving for food as usual but still ate.

Then, our volunteers came into the shed on Tuesday morning and noticed Wonkey was unable to stand. Despite, all their hard efforts, as well as the help from our vet, we had to make the hard decision to euthanise.

Although it was difficult, we didn't want him to suffer. He had a fantastic life and will be greatly missed

A few days later, we found our gentle boy Byron laying down in the field.

We brought him up to the yard and called the vet. His private parts were swollen and bleeding, and by the time Sabine arrived only a couple of hours after we called, he was already in what she thinks was septic shock.

This came as a very big surprise to us as the day before he was up in the yard getting his bucket and looking fine.

Byron was only 24 when he came to the Sanctuary twelve years ago through the pound. He was thin, exhausted and severely depressed on arrival, but over his time here he turned into a gentle boy who loved kids and was great with visitors. He was one of their favourites and ours too!



Kezzie had been struggling over the last few weeks and had gradually gotten weaker. One evening Nathan and Rebecca found her down in an awkward position and eventually got her up but over the following days it became more and more of a struggle to get Kezzie up. She was growing frustrated and hurting herself trying to stand.

Kezzie was 31 years old and came to the Sanctuary twelve years ago through the pound and with her unique bray, and shaggy coat, was very recognisable. Again, the sad decision was made to let her rest in peace.

Peppermint was one of our oldest residents at 44 years old. She came to us in 2019 along with her daughter Prada. A gentle sweet natured mare, she loved her rubs but had been struggling to get up in the mornings.

A tough decision had to be made as her quality of life was deteriorating and, sadly, we had let her go.

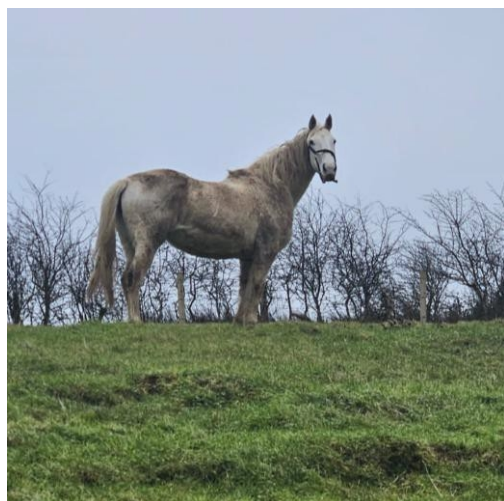
On that last sad day, she had a burst of energy, and our volunteer, Aimee, took her for a walk around the glades of the sanctuary, fed her treats and hugged her as she slept.



This is the hardest part of our job. Letting go of these special animals that make our days richer in so many ways. Many have suffered at the hands of extreme cruelty and neglect, yet they offer love and trust despite that.

Losing an animal never gets any easier but it gives us a bit of peace knowing we gave them the best life possible while they were with us.

New Arrivals



In Ireland, the 1st of February is also known as St Brigid's day.

St Brigid was known for her charitable and kind nature, and is known as the patron saint of livestock, among others.

Surely an omen, as on this date we welcomed Susie to the herd. Originally called Snowy, we decided to rename her Susie in honour of Sue. A stunning 16hh grey mare, she had lived on her own for the last twelve years.

Due to health issues, her owner had decided to try and rehome her. To say that she was excited to have new friends nearby is an understatement, she promptly jumped out of the field we'd put her in and joined the herd of ponies!!

We had been told that Susie was a registered Irish Draught but after checking her microchip, and some digging by our vet, we discovered that this was linked to a Wetherby's passport. A passport company that mainly deals with pedigree thoroughbreds! We have been asked to take hair samples and send them for DNA testing in order to receive her passport and are currently awaiting the results with bated breath. Watch this space!

Teddy and Lily

At the beginning of March, we received a call about two donkeys loose on the road in the Ballintogher / Sooeey area of Sligo. Nathan and one of our volunteers headed out to find them, and they turned out to be a 6-year-old stallion and a 14-year-old in-foal mare, now named Teddy and Lily.

Following vet checks, we have removed them to private property off the sanctuary, as a stallion in our herd would certainly have unwanted consequences.



Unfortunately, both donkeys had very overgrown hooves when they were found but they have since been trimmed by our trusty farrier Brian. Teddy will be gelded as soon as possible and following a six-week period where he remains fertile, he will be returned to the herd. Then we wait for the baby!!!

Fundraising

Our Christmas Raffle was a resounding success, and we raised close to €5000. Our sincere thanks to all the businesses that contributed prizes, and to all the people who bought tickets. We hope to have another raffle this Christmas.

We also took a stall at the Craft and Gift Fair held in the Clayton Hotel in March. It was the first time we tried a fundraiser like this, and we have learned a lot from the process. Again, we raised much needed funds and are considering attending more fairs like this in the future.

During the summer we plan to have a memorial walk in Sue's memory. Date and venue are to be confirmed, but we hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us.



Our fundraising stall

Major Projects 2025

This summer we have a big project ahead of us in the re-flooring of the hayshed. The surface of the shed currently resembles craters of the moon and every morning it takes us at least 30 minutes to clean the shed. When we do a deep clean at least once a week, it can take up to 2 hours.

We waste a lot of money on bedding having to fill all the holes and dips, so it is level and comfortable for the donkeys, and during the deepest part of winter we were going through a pallet of bedding every 2 weeks.

We are still looking for donations to help, but if you have any supplies, time or experience in concrete flooring, it would be gratefully accepted.

We also plan to improve the drainage on the land to enhance its quality and hopefully prevent the mud bath of every winter. Added to that we hope to improve fencing so that we can create smaller paddocks, again to enhance the quality of the land and to better manage grazing.

Foster Scheme

We always have donkeys, ponies and horses that are in good health and who we feel would benefit from being in a smaller group where they would get more attention from just one or two people and not have to deal with the many visitors we have at the Sanctuary. When these animals become available, we offer them on our Foster Scheme in the Republic of Ireland. This scheme works as a long term loan of the animal(s) to an individual, or family, in which the animal(s) will always legally belong to the Sanctuary and this works in favour of both parties, as we will always take the animals back should the fosterer have a change in circumstances that renders them unable to continue looking after the animals.

We offer donkeys and ponies for rehoming in pairs as they do not do well on their own, but on occasion we do receive enquiries for just one animal to keep another company, such as Puzzle.

Puzzle went to his new home in Meath in February to keep another donkey Bonny company after her companion passed away.



Right: Puzzle and Bonny

Bonny was very lonely and distressed after the loss of her companion but is now absolutely besotted by her new friend Puzzle, and Puzzle is really benefiting from having a home of his own and receiving extra attention after spending 13 years at the Sanctuary.

We always have donkeys and ponies in need of re-homing and over the coming months we will be adding the profiles of adoptable animals to our Facebook page. If you feel that you could give a donkey or pony a home of their own, please get in touch!

VOLUNTEERS

As always, we must thank all our volunteers, past and present, as we could not survive without them. They are the lifeblood of our organisation. We have several new volunteers, but some of the long serving stalwarts are still with us.

We also acknowledge the continuing enormous help we receive from The Volunteer Centre in Sligo who are great at finding us new people (victims?)

Now, with spring in the air, and the days lengthening, we look forward to re-opening in April. This year we don't open on our traditional first Saturday in April, as there is a wedding to attend – Congratulations to Nathan and Rebecca!! We will however hope to see you on Saturday 12th April as we reopen to see you all. Until then, blessed be.

To keep in touch meanwhile follow our posts on Facebook and Instagram. Warm Wishes to everyone and thank you for your support.



IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Following our recent incorporation into a *Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee* we will eventually be known as: THE SATHYA SAI DONKEY SANCTUARY CLG. We will have new Bank account and new IBAN numbers in the future but, for now, our Bank Account, IBAN and BIC codes remain the same. This is a lengthy process and we ask for your understanding as we make the transition.

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